

You & Your Lowly Desires

Shaykh 'Abdur-Rahmaan al-Mu'allimee [1]

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The Muslim contemplates his condition with respect to lowly desires (hawaa):

Suppose it reached you that someone had cursed the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), another had cursed Daawood, a third person had cursed 'Umar or 'Alee, a fourth person cursed your Imaam, and a fifth person cursed some other Imaam! Would your anger and effort to punish and discipline them be in accordance to what Islaam dictates? Would your anger over the first and second person be similar, but many times greater than over the others? Would your anger over the third person be less than this but greater than the rest? Finally, would your anger over the fourth and fifth person be almost the same, but much less than the above mentioned?

Suppose you read a verse (aayah) of the Qur'aan, and it appeared to you that it was in agreement with the saying or position of your Imaam. Then you read another aayah and it appeared to contradict some other sayings of your Imaam. Would your attitude be the same towards each verse? Would you not mind which of the two is proven - after careful consideration - to be as you thought, or not?

Suppose you come across two ahaadeeth not knowing whether they were authentic or not. One of them agreed with a saying of your Imaam and the other contradicted it. Would your attitude towards them be the same? Would you not mind if the chains of narration (sanad) of both of them were authentic or weak (da'eef)?

Suppose that you looked into an issue regarding which your Imaam had taken a position, and this position was contradicted by another Imaam. Wouldn't you have some hawaa (desire) in deciding which of the two positions was closer to the truth instead of wanting to investigate and know which one was most likely to be correct (raajih)? [2]

Suppose that a person whom you love and a person you dislike disagree on some issue and you are asked for the correct ruling regarding it. At this particular time, you do not remember what the ruling should be, so you want to research into it. Would your hawaa not lead you to incline to be in agreement with the one you love?

Suppose that yourself, a scholar whom you love, and one you dislike all gave a ruling on an issue. After referring to the rulings (fataawaa) of these other two scholars, you find them to be correct. It then reaches you that another scholar has severely criticised one of these fataawaa. Would you feel the same whether that fataawaa was yours, your friend's, or that of the scholar you dislike?

Suppose that you know someone to have done an evil (munkar), but have some excuse not to criticise it and do away with it yourself. You then find out that a scholar severely criticised that evil (which the person committed). Would your level of approval for this noble deed be the same whether the scholar was a friend of yours or an enemy? Would it be the same whether the person criticised was your friend or enemy?

Examine yourself and you will find that you have been afflicted with some sin or shortcoming in the Deen. You will also find the one you hate afflicted with a sin or shortcoming that is not any greater in Islaam than your sin. Is the repulsion you feel towards what he is doing the same as it is towards what you are doing? Do you find your hatred of yourself (due to committing sins) the same as your hatred of him? In short, the paths of hawaa are too many to be enumerated.

I have found myself sometimes looking into an issue thinking that my hawaa is involved in it! Then I feel that there is some discovery and meaning in my research, so I affirm and explain it in a way that really impresses me. I then come across some knowledge that ruins what I have explained. Consequently I find myself uneasy with this, and my soul tries to make me force some response, and then overlook discussing it. This is only so because when I first explained what I did in a way that impressed me I began to desire it to be correct. This was so despite the fact that no one knew about it, so how would it be if I had announced my position amongst the people and then realised what would ruin it? How would it be if I didn't realise anything but someone else came with the counter-argument against me? How would it be if that someone was a person I disliked?

The scholar has not been given the responsibility of not having any hawaa, for this is outside human capability. Rather what is obligatory for the scholar [and everyone else] is that he should closely examine his soul for its hawaa until he recognises it, then he must be on his guard against it. He must carefully look at the truth because it is the truth. If it becomes clear to him that the truth opposes his hawaa, he chooses the truth over his desires.

This, and Allaah knows best, is the meaning of the hadeeth that an-Nawawee mentioned in his Forty Hadeeth, stating that its chain of narration is Saheeh [3]:

“None of you believes until his desires (hawaa) are in accordance with what I have come with.”

The scholar may fall short in being prudent against his hawaa and be easy on himself so that his soul inclines toward some falsehood and thus he aids it. He presumes that he has not gone beyond the truth and become an enemy to it. It is likely that none but the infallible (the Prophet sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) is saved from falling into this (to one extent or another). The scholars are but of different degrees in this. From them are those who are easy with their hawaa much of the time and are so atrocious that one who does not know the nature of people and the extent to which hawaa can affect a person would confidently assert that the person was deliberately contradicting the truth. There are others who rarely accommodate their desires and their case is not very serious.

Whoever studies the books of those who have not based their ijtihaad upon the Book and the Sunnah will see many strange things. However, this will not become clear to him except in those areas where he has no hawaa, or where his hawaa is in contradiction to what is in these books. When he accommodates his hawaa he will claim that those in agreement with him are free of lowly desires, and that all those who contradict him are following their hawaa.

There were individuals from those who have preceded, who used to go so far in order to be on guard against their own desires that they would end up making a mistake from some other angle. An example of this is that of the judge in front

of whom his brother and enemy dispute. He goes to such an extreme in trying to avoid following his hawaa that he ends up being unjust to his brother. This is like the one who walks on the path avoiding the ditch on his right hand side, ending up falling into the one on his left!

Footnotes:

[1] - He is the 'Allaamah, the Shaykh, the Dhahabee of the time, the Imaam, the religious critic 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Yahyaa ibn 'Alee al-Mu'allimee al-Yamaanee (d.1386H). The book which this treatise is taken from is his excellent and most beneficial work, Al-Qaa'id ilaa Tas'heehul Aqaa'id.

[2] - Therefore, you would not base your inclination towards one position merely upon the fact that the one who took this stance was greatly esteemed by you. This is the way of the dry, inflexible blind followers (muqallidah) so beware of them! It is from the grace of Allaah that He has removed from the Ummah - to a great degree - 'madhabite' bigotry and fanaticism. However, something worse than this has replaced it, and that is party fanaticism, (at-ta'assub al-Hizbee), we ask Allaah for aid! There is no strength except from Allaah.

[3] - Inauthentic. Rather it is weak (da'eef). Ibn Abi 'Aasim has reported it in as Sunnah, No. 15, as well as al-Khateeb in his Taareekh, 4/369, and al-Baghawee in Sharh-us-Sunnah, 1/212, from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr, al-Haafidh ibn Rajab explained in Jaami' ul-'Uloom wal-Hikam, Pgs. 364-365 that the sanad has three defects to it.

The fundamental meaning of this hadeeth is of course correct, and is expressed in a number of places in the Qur'aan, as Ibn Rajab himself explained. Allaah t'aalaa, said:

"But no, by your Lord, they can have no true faith, until they refer to you (O Muhammad) for judgement in all disputes between them, and then find in themselves no resistance to your decisions, but accept them with full submission." [Soorah an-Nisaa' (4):65]